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IV

B. D. THESIS

by

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THE CHURCH AND ADULT EDUCATION

by

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Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration,
1924-25

Thesis

Submitted in the Department of
Religious Education
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

1929

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INTRODUCTION

Almost every individual and such institutions as are interested in changing men's lives, chief among which is the church, hold some view of human nature, expressed or implied. The nature of this philosophy is a matter of considerable importance, too, because in the long run it determines basic attitudes toward man and the ways they shall be expressed.

In the case of the church it was natural enough, in a pre-scientific age, that it should arrive at its conception of man by the theological route--and there resulted the doctrine of total depravity. Altho essentially evil in this view, he was fortunately not beyond redemption. (Indeed had it not been for this aspect of the matter, of what use would religious effort have been?) But with the rise of the evolutionary theory of man, followed by psychological studies, this theological view was superseded by the instinct theory. In the rapid popularization of this view that soon followed, such ideas as "you can't change human nature" and "man is naturally a fighting animal" became common. From a religious standpoint this was quite as bad, if not worse than its theological predecessor.

This paper is an attempt to examine human behavior in the light of the newer psychology with a view to determining whether these views of human nature are correct--whether in a word, human nature is modifiable or not. If it is found that man is subject to influence, some ways the church may employ

in shaping lives religiously will be considered. The order in which the subject will be developed, then, is as follows: (1) human behavior in the light of modern psychology; (2) adult learning; (3) preaching as a means of influencing adults; (4) the stake of the church in adult education; and, (5) group discussion as the method of adult education. We now turn to a consideration of behavior and the new psychology.

I
BEHAVIOR

1. Older Instinct-Psychology Untenable

It is a misapplication of physical science methods

It has been the practice in the physical sciences to proceed by analysis--by breaking up an element into its component parts and then studying these separately. It was quite natural, therefore, when the study of human nature began, to proceed on the same basis--analytical. It was believed that every action of man could be explained in terms of some part, or combination of parts, called instincts. Indeed the process in psychology, atomism, takes its name from the physical sciences.

Not only is the method of atomism being superseded in psychology, but even in physics. Here it "already has transcended the notion that bodies are aggregates of elements--transcended it not only upon speculative or metaphysical grounds alone, but also upon the basis of experiment and mathematical analysis. Thruout nature, Whitehead says, any concrete actuality is a dynamic whole, a complex event, not a corpuscle or an aggregate of corpuscles."-----"Further, these dynamic wholes act spontaneously, and they even transform themselves from within themselves ------ initiative is everywhere present."[1]

This concept of organism in physics parallels the rise of a similar idea in psychology, known as the "Gestalt" concept, the doctrine of wholes, or configuration. The integration of personality is the principal concern of the newer

1. Coe, G.A., The Motives of Men, p 84f

psychologists. Here, man is not regarded as a static mechanism in a fixed environment, but rather as a dynamic, creative being; and by virtue of this in a changing environment, so that the process is one of constant interaction and change--a "whole a-making".

No agreement as to what an instinct is

Instinct-psychology is breaking down, too, because there is little agreement among its adherents as to what an instinct is. While there may be very general concurrence, there is by no means a close enough approximation to form the basis of a science. James, Thorndike, McDougall and others, all have their own notions of what the thing is--but there is little conformity. The reason for this has probably been stated by Thorndike: "Lack of observations of human behavior and the difficulty of interpreting the facts that have been observed, which is the consequence of a civilized environment, the transitoriness of instincts and the early incessant and intimate interaction of nature and nurture, thus baffle the cataloguer of original tendencies."[1] And yet twelve pages later Thorndike proceeds to set forth an instinct of hunting which Angell declares not to exist! Bernard has shown the widespread confusion among writers as to the meaning of instinct, describing it as a "sort of catch-all for vague and indefinite ideas about the causes or relationships of activities."[2] Whether instincts exist or not, therefore, we can make little use of them until we know what they are.

1. The Original Nature of Man, p 40
2. Instinct, p 172

No agreement as to names or number of instincts

Confusion on this matter is worse confounded when we come to listing, or rather, trying to list, the instincts. Every cataloguer is original in large degree! The following shows how widely the suggestions of various writers differ in the number of instincts found:

Ames	2	
Angell	16	
Freud, Jung, LeBon	1	(no agreement)
James	32	
McDougall	15	(or more)
Thorndike	40	(at least)
Trotter	4	
Warren	26	

Pillsbury, Watson, Hunter, Graham Wallas, Carlton Parker, Ellwood, Hayes and others all have their lists, varying greatly.[1] And so it goes.

Faris sums the whole problem up when he says:"The difficulty in formulating a doctrine of instincts is that habit and social interaction enter in so early that it is difficult to disentangle the original from the acquired."---------"the conditioned reflex (or response)--begins to modify inherited reactions from the very first, and continues so to modify them. Instincts are therefore impossible to make out in their purity, for they are constantly being modified by habit and social experience."[2]

Instinct-psychology dependent on genetic method and behavior of lower animals.

Those who hold this psychology find most of their 'proof' in recounting the behavior of previous generations, each one stamping in some reaction which we observe today. Baseball is

1. Faris, E, Are Instincts Data or Hypotheses? p 187f
2. Faris, E, Ibid, p 188f

thus said to be a modern manifestation of the prehistoric savages' desire to run, throw and strike. (This psychologist was obviously an American; he forgets that French and Chinese do not play baseball!) Likewise he says that the former dependence of man on a horse is shown by children's desire to play horse with stick or something.[1] So much of this type of reasoning is resorted to, even by McDougall, that little credence can be given it. We know little enough about our own society, much less that of early man.

More credence, presumably, might be given to a study of the lower animals. A moment's reflection, however, will show the fallacy of this. A robin, for example, can fly, build a nest, hatch the eggs and care for the young without previous experience. It was formerly assumed that human mothers were in possession of a maternal instinct which enabled them to perform their duties adequately. "But," says Faris, "if untaught human mothers be carefully observed, very little evidence appears in support of this notion."-------- "It is safe to say that the doctrine of a maternal instinct so eloquently preached by psychologists is not only untrue, but has been the occasion of much suffering and even of the death of many children."[2]

Put in another way, the quality which distingushes man from the lower animals, his capacity for modifiable behavior, makes invalid any analogy in their behavior."Instinctive behavior is the crowning glory of bugs and insects; ---- ours is a higher nature."[3] This very fact makes the observation of an

1. Patrick, G T W, Psychology of Relaxation, p 56
2. Op. cit. p 193
3. Dorsey, G A, Why We Behave Like Human Beings, 417

instinct in man all but impossible. At best it can be nothing but a hypothetical inference in a complex human situation. So if the instincts observed in animals cannot be applied to man, and they cannot be separated out of him, they will have to be abandoned as useless for the purposes of explaining human behavior.

"However, it may still be objected that fear is a reality and so is anger, and rivalry, and love, and mastery of others, and self-abasement, maternal love, sexual desire, gregariousness and envy, and each has its own appropriate deed as a result. Of course they are realities. So are suction, rusting of metals, thunder and lightning and lighter-than-air flying machines. But science and invention did not get on as long as men indulged in the notion of special forces to account for such phenomena. Men tried that road, and it only led them into learned ignorance. They spoke of nature's abhorrence of a vacuum; of a force of combustion; of intrinsic nisus toward this and that; of heaviness and levity as forces. It turned out that these 'forces' were only the phenomena over again, translated from a specific and concrete form (in which at least they were actual) into a generalized form in which they were verbal. They converted a problem into a solution which afforded a simulated satisfaction."-----
"---as yet we tend to regard sex, hunger, fear and even much more complex active interests as if they were lump forces, like the combustion of gravity of old-fashioned physical science."[1]

Some additional obstacles

Instincts have been regarded as impulsions rooted in our

1. Dewey, John, Human Nature and Conduct, 149f

natures and bound to express themselves willy-nilly. Pugnacity, for example, in the sense of being unhappy unless one can fight somebody, is non-existent. But pugnacity as a habit, a learned reaction, is another matter. For man, with his complex environment, habit is far more important and convenient than instinct. Modern civilization calls for habits and skills for which no possible pre-existent set of drives, or instincts, could adequately provide. Here only infinite capacity for adaptation has survival value.

Indeed Woodworth has maintained that any mental mechanism can become a drive, that is, "we can develop a positive interest in and tendency to repeat anything that we ever do--we can 'take an interest' in anything. Watson, too, from his point of view, and with his own conception of method, holds that a man can acquire practically any qualities. 'Condition' the few original reflexes in appropriate manner, and you will make of an individual a religious devotee, a monster of vice, or what you will."[1]

Conclusion

In view of the fact that atomism is not applicable to human nature; that there is no agreed-upon definition of an instinct; that there is no generally accepted list of them; that the genetic method and lower animal observation is unsound; that instincts cannot be separated out of the vast bundle of habits man acquires, the instinct-psychology is rejected as a working method in studying human behavior. "Instincts appear to be classificatory devices and nothing more."[2]

1. Coe, G.A., op. cit. 84
2. Ibid, 84

2. Human Motivation in Light of Newer Psychology

Infancy and the conditioned response

As has already been pointed out, the fundamental problem in formulating a doctrine of instincts is the difficulty of separating the original from the acquired. Whether a baby is born with any instincts or not, we do know that he has impulses to act--not necessarily to act in particular ways, but broad urges to activity. Confronted with any given situation, he will probably do something about it--he will respond to it in some way or other. Thru the conditioning of these responses in various ways, habits are formed. This process continues thruout life, as new and more complicated situations arise. The slowing down of the process in adulthood is simply due to the fact that the individual has already experienced most of the elements in any given situation. The capacity for new behavior, however, remains.

Thus it will be apparent that childhood is tremendously important to the child, since he is then meeting a greater variety of experiences and adjusting himself to them. But for that very reason, the early years are of great moment in the study of adult motivation. We know now that maturity is continuous, and not discontinuous, with childhood; and that this continuity, together with the extreme modifiability of the early years, gives us new insight into the real origin of many adult traits.[1]

"Psychiatrists and experts in child-guidance are daily tracing to particular experiences what seems at first sight to be

1. Cf. Coe, G A, The Motives of Men, 99

native and ineradicable personal traits. Moreover, many a bound personality is being released by the interjection of new experiences and the formation of corresponding new habits. This is true of both children and adults, and it is particularly noteworthy that the release of adults often depends upon undoing a knot which was tied in childhood."[1]

Further illustration of the thesis here maintained that behavior is to be explained in terms of experience and environment is illustrated by the phenomena of heredity and development of lower organisms. Morgan relates how when he raised certain aphids on the heavy salts of magnesia and sugar, they became winged. When raised on other substances, they remain wingless. This result he produced invariably. The germ plasm had within itself, of course, the possibility of wings, but the thing to be particularly noted is that it was the environmental conditions during its development which determined whether a given germ plasm should be winged or wingless. As he says: "Here we have an excellent example of how a germ plasm produces one result in a given environment, and in another environment a different one without intermediate forms."[2]

Child bears testimony, likewise, to the close relations existing between a developing organism and its environment in his experiments with planaria. These worms frequently reproduce by fission, and also develop new heads on the severed portion.

1. Coe, G A, op. cit. 100
2. Morgan, T H, Physical Basis of Heredity, 210

He found that in similar pieces from animals in similar physiological condition a decrease in head frequency or a shift toward the headless condition could be induced by low temperatures, narcotics or carbon dioxide.[1]

So it will be apparent that even in the field of the developing organism (which is simply a specialized kind of behavior), its give and take relations with the environment determine its development. The point of view here maintained is that behavior in general is determined in the same way. It would seem that from the moment spermatazoon and ovum unite an organism is created that is by nature an experiencer. Hence behavior is to be explained in terms of the antecedent and accompanying conditions.

In other words, human nature involves a plastic heredity which submits itself to the guidance of environment as interpreted by intelligence. Unlike lower types of organisms, man does not inherit a tendency to do definite things (instinctive behavior) but rather the ability to learn to do whatever the situation may call for. Modifiability, teachability, are, then the real touchstones of human behavior. The genius, the born musician, for example, cannot play by nature alone, but has the material out of which a real musician can be made with proper instruction. The possible permutations of the impulses which form the basis of human behavior reach staggering figures, unnumbered billions. Therein rests man's ability to learn to do new things, to react to situations not predetermined by his inherited structure.

1. Child, C M, Individuality in Organisms, 181

Instincts therefore unnecessary to explain human behavior

It will be obvious at this point that human behavior is not to be explained in terms of certain forces (instincts)--that our reactions are not the result of these drives. They are rather --at least for the most part--learned, or habit reactions, which have been acquired thru the interaction of individual and his environment. Habits will enter into, and in part determine, the individual's response to new situations, as in most cases only a part of it will be wholly new..

No better illustration of the futility of explaining behavior in terms of instincts could be found than the wide diversity of man's insitutions and moral codes. If the stock of native instincts exists, it will, of course, be the same everywhere. But if that were true how could such diverse practices as human sacrifice, polygamy, polyandry, burial alive, exposure of the old and parliamentary institutions be explained? These all have been, or are being practiced somewhere. "Since such a diversity cannot be attributed to original identity, the development of native impulse must be stated in terms of acquired habits, not the growth of customs in terms of instincts."[1]

Josey sums the matter up thus: "Instead of such attempts to interpret behavior in terms of forces (instincts) that are felt to be necessary conditions of activity, we should recognize that the activity itself of the organism must be scientific starting point. How it acts is what we wish to know and explain, and in so far as we can do this, the explanation is in terms

1. Dewey, John, Human Nature and Conduct, 91

of the organism's structure, its experience, its physiological conditions and confronting situation. In its activities there are experienced impulses and emotions, which should be regarded as aspects of behavior, rather than as entities or characters in terms of which behavior can be explained. Thus it is seen that the general recognition that the behavior of the organism must be in terms of experience is sound."[1]

Some further aspects of human behavior

In stating that behavior is to be explained in terms of the individual's experience and confronting situation, it is not to be inferred that his actions are altogether determined for him. Personality is creative, of course--it is not passively molded by the situation, it enters into it. Both the individual and the situation are different as a result of their interaction. They cannot be considered apart--that was exactly the trouble with the older instinct-psychology which studied the individual apart from his situation. It would be no more scientific to consider fish behavior out of water than human behavior out of its social situation.

This interweaving of agent and situation is technically known as 'circular response.' Since both the individual and the situation are active, changing, and capable of being changed, it will be obvious that each is responding to the other, so that the response is really to a relating. "Behavior is a function of the interweaving between activity of organism and activity of environment, that is, response is to a relating. By this in-

1. Josey, C C, The Role of Instinct in Social Psychology 42f

terlocking activity individual and situation each is creating itself anew, thus giving us the evolving situation."[1]

For example, take the boy going to school. He does not respond merely to the school, but also to his own response to the school. In other words, the mere fact of going to school may lead him to do better work than he would at home with his mother. His own activity, that is, is a function of that set up between him and the school. The school, likewise, is affected by his activity-between, either thru his or his parents' demand upon it, and so it may improve its methods. In this on-going activity, or interweaving, the more the school alters the boy, the more chance is there of the boy altering the school. The relation between boy and school is therefore to be expressed in terms of the activity-between, as well as of the boy and the school.

This approach to the study of human behavior, it will be observed, is very different from the instinct, or atomistic psychology in that it considers the whole organism and considers it in its environment, behaving. This doctrine of wholes is the basis of the new and important psychology of Gestalt. "No single characteristic of a man has much meaning until it is understood in its relation to his other characteristics. Or, more accurately, it is the total interactions and the something being brought into existence by these which makes the whole personality."[2]

In other words, the only way human behavior can be fully understood is to consider the whole in process, or a-making. If conduct and character are to be understood in the case of

1. Follett, M P, Creative Experience, 89
2. Ibid, 96

any individual, it will be necessary to know his past experience and the present situation. To explain behavior in terms of certain instincts or other is bootless. The more facts that can be secured about any given case of behavior, the greater is the likelihood of approaching a true understanding of it. "If dissection has been the method of traditional psyhology, the study of integrative processes is surely the chief characteristic of contemporary psychology."[1]

We have sought to establish the fact, thus far, that the older instinct-psychology is untenable. Man's nature is not fixed in hard and fast lines. Much animal behavior may be instinctive, tho it has been greatly exaggerated even here. But the distinctive thing about human behavior is its freedom from behavior of this type--it is characterized by plasticity, by the ability to learn new things. And the remarkable thing about this power is its extent, being practically unlimited. It will be necessary now to apply this general view to the class of people we are particularly concerned with--adults. We now pass therefore, to a consideration of adult learning.

1. Follett, M P, op. cit. 115

II
ADULT LEARNING

There is a widespread belief that it is extremely difficult for adults to learn. It is set forth popularly in the saying, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks." If this is true, then a large part of the preaching that has been going on these many centuries is wasted. The fact of the matter is that there has not been until quite recently any objective investigation of the matter. As in the case of many another commonly held belief, the light science is beginning to throw on the matter shows this idea also to be a product of dark ignorance.

The general conclusion which the latest study sets forth concerning the matter is this: "In general, nobody under forty-five should restrain himself from trying to learn anything because of a belief or a fear that he is too old to be able to learn it. Nor should he use that fear as an excuse for not learning anything which he ought to learn. If he fails in learning it, inability due directly to age will very rarely, if ever, be the reason."[1]

Conditioning factors

The rate of learning of adults from twenty-five to forty-five will probably be about the same as that at which they would have learned the same thing at fifteen or twenty. The rate will be determined, as in the case of learners of any age, by the general intelligence and special capacities of the individual. "Age, in itself, is a minor factor in either success or failure.

1. Thorndike, E L, Adult Learning, 177

Capacity, interest, energy and time are the essentials." [1]

It is important to bear in mind that while age is not a barrier, necessarily, it does not remove any of the usual difficulties educational procedure encounters "of adaptation to individual differences, stimulation of interest, arrangement for economy in learning each element, and organization of the subject of study so that each element of learning shall help all the others as much as possible and interfere with them as little as possible."[2] Particularly is there danger of overestimating the immediate interest of the adult student in his subject as compared with the forced attention of the younger pupil. Frequently the urgency of the adult may be offset by fatigue, as adult classes are largely conducted at the end of the day's work. But "on the whole, the facts of adult learning are a strong support to those who have given much time and thot and money to adult education."[3]

Some advantages of adult learning over that of earlier years

While there is probably little doubt but that the greatest part of an individual's formal schooling should come in his early years, there are decided advantages in having a larger part of schooling come in the adult years than is found in the present system. The more important are as follows:

(1) "A better selection of persons to be taught could be made. The abilities and interests of individuals can be better

1. Thorndike, Op. cit., 179
2. Ibid, 180
3. Idem

known with each year of their growth and experience."[1]

(2) Likewise a better selection of the content of instruction could be made both for the individual as neighbor and citizen as well as producer and enjoyer. Obviously, with more experience of life, needs are more apparent and broader understanding is developed.

(3) The sequence of learning is improved--the best incentive to learning is a recognized need. The book-keeper will study accounting with zeal when he knows that his advancement depends on it. Without that knowledge accounting is as dry as it is difficult.

(4) "A loss of abilities by forgetting or of time by relearning can be prevented."[2] Information learned in the grade school may be forgotten by the time it is needed and hence have to be relearned.

(5) The rapid progress being made in the arts and sciences makes knowledge in these fields obsolescent in a short time. Nothing short of continuous schooling here will satisfy the demand for recency.

The reasonableness and cogency of these arguments cannot be doubted. As Thorndike well says: "The present quantitative distribution of schooling in our best communities is almost entirely a matter of public indiscriminate compulsion for certain early years and of entirely private volition thereafter. This seems improvable. Public welfare depends as truly on who goes

1. Thorndike, Op. cit., 190
2. Idem

to school after fifteen as on how many go to school till fifteen. The continued schooling of some individuals is so useful to the nation that it should be assured. Adult schooling is a promising means for gaining flexibility in caring for such individuals. The facts of adult ability to learn should caution us against attaching too much weight to youth in the laws and customs which decide who shall be forced or encouraged to go to school."[1]

It will now be apparent that not only is human behavior in general subject to modification, but that adults are also. From a psychological standpoint, therefore, the church's claim to be able to change adult behavior thru religion is justified. In Protestantism, the traditional method of bringing the claims of religion to the individual's attention has been thru preaching. How can it influence behavior? This is the next question before us.

1. Thorndike, Op. cit., 194

III

PREACHING AS A METHOD OF INFLUENCING ADULT BEHAVIOR

Preaching has been defined as the delivery of "an oral message, incorporated into an order of worship, on a religious truth, directed to the popular mind with a view to a decision of the hearers which shall lead them into the Christian experience, individually and socially."[1] This definition of preaching will be that used in this paper with one addition: namely, that the preaching be that of the regular pastor of the church. In other words, we are applying to this form of behavior some of the principles suggested earlier in the paper, that is, we are considering the matter in the light of the whole situation, not neglecting the 'circular response.' This is done not only because it is more scientific, but also because it is usual.

The personality of the preacher is one of those important factors entering into the influence of preaching which cannot be considered in the abstract. Many a sermon read in cold print might satisfy all the canons of effective preaching and yet strike no responsive chord in the reader; preached to his congregation by its author, it might prove to be a stirring message. Perhaps more than any other of man's productions, a sermon has to have the breath of the preacher's life breathed into it before it will live. But if to the personality of any preacher there be added the craftsman's skill and the psychologist's insight, its influence will be greatly strengthened. It is to some of the psychological factors we now turn.

1. Davis, O S, Principles of Preaching, 184

Getting and holding attention

"What we attend to controls our behavior." And by the same token, what one gets others to attend to controls theirs. Among the most obvious of these is movement. One visiting New York for the first time and walking down Broadway's "roaring forties" at night will find his attention fixed here and there by ingenious electric signs portraying animated figures. These lively representations illustrate at once a strength and weakness,--they get the attention, but do not hold it long; they move, but do not move on, since they endlessly repeat themselves. A play, on the other hand, has not only physical movement, but movement in the plot. Between them, the attention of the audience seldom wanders off. And so it must be with the sermon. Not only should the preacher himself show some animation and life, but his message should move along steadily toward the conclusion.

A certain amount of suspense in a sermon is an added means of holding attention. Every one enjoys a little hunt, or chase, because there is always the element of surprise in it. If fish crowded to seize the hook as soon as it was lowered into the water, what sport would there be in angling? Hence the interesting preacher will oftentimes merely hint at an idea, or block out the outline, leaving the congregation to follow up the details. After all, preaching is not thinking for people, but with them. The more they can be stimulated to reflection, the more effective is the preaching.

Indeed, preaching that is an adventure in cooperative

thinking between the preacher and his congregation is not only more effective psychologically, but more in keeping with the day's democratic spirit. The dogmatic, assertive type, the pulpit autocrat of the past, is twice-buried today--by psychology and the times too. "A wise preacher can so build his sermon that it will be, not a dogmatic monologue but a cooperative dialogue in which all sorts of things in the minds of the congregation--objections, doubts, and confirmations--will be brought to the front and fairly dealt with. This requires clairvoyance on the preacher's part as to what the people are thinking, but any man who lacks that has no business in the pulpit anyway."[1]

The virtue of making preaching a cooperative enterprise of this sort lies, then, in the stimulus it provides the listener to do some thinking. Thot is born out of the conflict of impulse and habit--and one of the ways in which a preacher can provoke it, in addition to the possible conflict of impulses aroused by his sermon and the habits of his auditors, is to state objections to his own thesis. This is not only a condition of thinking, but of cooperative enterprise. These objections should be fairly met. Such phrases as the following may be used to introduce them: "But some of you will say", or, "Let us consider a few questions that inevitably arise", or, "Face frankly with me the opposing view," or, "Some of you have had experiences that seem to contradict what we are saying."

1. Fosdick, H E, What is the Matter with Preaching? Harper's Magazine, July, 1928, 137

This implies, as has already been suggested, that the preacher will have to keep alive the faculty of seeing other points of view than his own. The nature of preaching is such that it tends to produce in the preacher an undue respect for his own opinions! With people coming Sunday after Sunday to hear him, he reasons, what he says must indeed be worth listening to! Perhaps no better antidote for this is to be found than membership in some discussion group where every member is on a par. The minister needs to develop and keep alive a genuine habit of thinking of other viewpoints, not merely making their statement part of his homiletical technique. He must not set up straw objections and then bowl them over with solid arguments--the sham of the battle will soon be obvious.

Perhaps preachers need this final word a little more than some other speakers--respect the attention limits! Talking too long not only tires his listeners, but also offers more than can be assimilated. A picture that has too many elements in it, too many uncentered lines, conveys little meaning. Like the well-conceived picture, which captures the eye and leads it to the central theme, the preacher-craftsman will bring his auditors' mind to a focus with a few pithily-developed points.

Other conditions of effective preaching

Perhaps the largest factor in the success of the modern advertiser is his proficiency in appealing to people's wants. Shoes, for example, are not advertised just for their own sake, on the assumption that a certain number of readers may need a pair, but the appeal is to pride in appearance. Automobile ads

connect the possession of a car with social esteem, etc. In other words, instead of merely displaying his products, the manufacturer reaches out and touches a weakness we have for his type of goods. He sells them to us by thinking of our wants.

The preacher cannot afford to let the sons of this world be wiser than the sons of light. His business is with people's spiritual wants. The man who does not deal with some problem weighing on the hearts and minds of his hearers no more deserves a hearing than the manufacturer who did not appeal to people's wants deserves to sell his goods. One of the dangers of expository sermons may be that they begin with a text instead of with human needs. Ultimately, a congregation will not be satisfied with smooth essays or finely-spun philosophies--they want bread and not stones.

There is but one way to discover the needs of men and women--and that is to know them personally. If pastoral calling had no other virtue, it would be an invaluable source of knowledge for the effective preacher. Friendly, first-hand Knowledge of his people will save the preacher's messages from becoming academic, arid, and impersonal. Then, too, the friendly relations with the members of his flock which pastoral calling develops, will slowly but surely melt down those emotional and intellectual barriers between them and their vision of new truth. A good understanding between pastor and people removes mountains. This is a source of influence not open to any other type of public speaker, and the preacher cannot afford to neglect it.

Another important means of heightening the sermon's

ability to move men is picturesqueness and imagery. Most people are eye-minded--and all are moved to action by emotions. How much more meaningful than "Christ, the Logos," is "Jesus, the Good Shepherd;" than a "pious soul" is a "God-intoxicated soul!" The value of imagery, wholly aside from its greater interest and beauty, is that it carries its own emotional appeal--it gives the idea incorporating it both driving and sticking power. An apt simile or metaphor is usually worth several paragraphs of abstract explanation--and more effective at that. We recall pictures where we find difficulty in restating ideas. So if the preacher associates his ideas with vivid, colorful language, his auditors will recall both more easily, and hence the possibility of ideas influencing conduct is multiplied many times.

A final and indispensable characteristic of effective preaching is its creative, kindling qualities. When it does not widen the congregation's vistas, freshen its atmosphere as a spring rain, and set its pulses beating a little faster it is doing less than it ought. Preaching should bring to pass in the people's lives the thing it is concerned with. In this, the sermon is very different from the essay or lecture, which are characterized by their take-it-or-leave-it attitude; it not only aims at acceptance by the hearers, but action as well. It was said of Phillips Brooks, "He makes one feel so strong."

It will be obvious that this elusive and subtle quality in preaching is largely personal. And yet if the preacher will deal with real problems earnestly and helpfully and develop friendly, personal relationships with his people, he cannot but

create in them good influences. A knowledge of men and their motives will give him discernment in touching off their sources of power. The inspirer of men in the mass will also be the shepherd who knows each of his sheep.

Preaching and the laws of learning

Fundamentally, influencing human behavior involves learning new ways of action. Hence, in considering preaching as a method of changing people, it will be desirable to consider the laws of learning, to discover just how preaching fits into the process. They follow:

(1) The first law of learning is that a mode of action is learned by practice: what is not practiced is not learned. Mere practice, however, is not enough--it must be accompanied by the right attitude within if the desirable habit is to be formed. What is done on the outside, what is felt on the inside, and the way these are connected up on the inside are the three things that count.

(2) But this is only the first step--the second is effect. Whatever we do with success and satisfaction, we tend to do again. Conversely, what is accompanied by failure and annoyance we do not tend to repeat. If it were not for this fact, we would learn by all our mistakes as well as our successes. Social approval and disapproval enter here as strong factors in the formation of habits.

(3) The third law is that of association. The classical illustration of this is the dog that was given a piece of meat at the same moment a bell was rung. This was continued for a

while, until the mere ringing of the bell, wholly apart from the presence of the meat, caused the dog's mouth to water. Most of of the fears of children are learned in this way--they see some adult show signs of fear in connection with a spider, for example, and so the next time they see a spider they also fear it. Almost all of our likes and dislikes are learned in this way.

(4) We seldom learn only one thing at a time--we have attendant learnings. In the case of the child setting about to learn a poem assigned by the teacher, there were, in addition to the poem learned (the primary learning), what are called secondary learnings. These included such things as the change taking place in the child's attitude toward all poetry, toward the teacher, himself, and authority. Each of these things was being learned as truly as the poem itself.

(5) The key to the whole business of learning is the mind-set--the readiness or unreadiness of the individual. This determines (a) what a person will practice and (b) the attitude he will have toward failure of success. In other words, if he is already favorably disposed toward a certain course of action, does it, and succeeds at it (providing real effort has gone into the attempt), then a permanent interest in it will have been brought about.

If, on the other hand, one has an unfavorable mind-set toward what the educator or preacher considers desirable, what is to be done? Then some interest which the individual does have must be taken and nurtured, for one can only begin where the learner now is. Everything that one is already interested in has a penumbra of interests around it, and the preacher's task is

to locate either a principal interest or one associated with it, connecting it to the thing he wishes learned.

(6) Finally, there is/the principle of use and disuse. The more often a thing is practiced, the more permanently will it be established as/a habit. Conversely, disuse weakens a habit. It is here that the key to unlearning what us bad is given. Since, as a rule, habits cannot be attacked directly, the procedure is to build a new, positive learning with attitudes and activities that will crowd out those which are undesirable.

The application of the laws of learning to preaching

With the laws of learning before us, let us proceed to consider the manner in which the preacher may utilize them in his efforts to influence human behavior. We have already pointed out that the preacher should address himself to people's spiritual needs. But sometimes those needs are not recognized or are not present in any great degree. Then he must try to arouse a desire in his congregation for the way of living he is advocating. If, for example, he would have them practice the presence of God, he must make the manner of life resulting from it so attractive that they will want to do it. Only then will they begin to do it and start, at least, forming the habit.

But it is not enough just to have moved his auditors to make a beginning--they need the encouragement of approval. In general, the preacher, ought to praise right conduct and tactfully condemn its opposite. In a sense, the preacher is speaking for more than himself--he is presumably speaking as

an ambassador of God and a representative of the church. In this way, perhaps, his words have more force than they might from another source.

Since learning by association is largely a matter of bringing the new into association with the older, more basic and better liked responses, the preacher will always strive to link up the behavior he recommends to the known and liked. Many years ago in college strong efforts were made to get students into the habit of practicing the "morning watch", as it was called. Commendable as the effort may have been in itself it hardly employed the right associative technique, for it required the student to get up at least fifteen minutes earlier than usual and to engage in the watch in a cold room. The thing ran counter to two very well established and quite natural desires--to sleep as late as was consistent and to be comfortable. Both these might have been overcome--but not without considerable effort for most people. So, if the preacher is recommending to his parishoners the practice of the presence of God, he will suggest a time and a method agreeable to them--following dinner, around the table, let us say. It thus becomes associated with a pleasant habit, eating.

Other things being equal, that behavior which carries with it more and richer attendant learnings will be the more desirable. Family worship, or devotions, may not only be the means of enlarging the life of the spirit, but also of heightening the appreciation of poetry and the Bible, creating richer family life, etc. In establishing the desire for Christian

conduct, the minister should point out its fruits--its incidental benefits.

One of the minister's most important tasks in preaching is to make his sermon connect up with the mind-sets, or interests of his hearers. The more central the interest appealed to, the greater the possibilities of influence. Just as it would be useless for a gardening specialist to advertise in a machinery journal, so it would be a waste of a preacher's time to discuss some highly technical and controversial matter of Biblical criticism. Interest in such a theme is limited to scholars. Likewise, many people might not be interested in family worship in itself, but they are interested in their families, the Bible, certain books, etc. Using some such assured interest as these, the minister can lead from them to his theme, worship in the home. In other words, every sermon should, so far as possible, be joined on to that interest most likely to carry it thru to the point of action. Only by meeting people on their level can they be raised to anything higher or better.

Another important suggestion which the laws of learning bring to us regards the changing of habits. Psychologists all bear testimony to the practical impossibility of attacking a habit directly in order to break it up. The only way undesirable habits can be changed is to build new and better ones, so that the old will be crowded out. The most the preacher can do is to make the Christian life winsome and attractive, encouraging righteous living at every opportunity. So will people be helped in living up to their best, and the old, unideal ways

of life will become less and less attractive. This is well illustrated in Begbie's "Twice-Born Men", where in practically every instance, the old habit of drinking, stealing, lying, or whatever may have characterized the old way of life, dropped off immediately once conversion took place. The superiority of the religion of Jesus, with its emphasis on doing good, over the Judaism of his time, stressing prohibitions, is well illustrated here. From a psychological standpoint it is far better to influence people to do this than not to do that, to say nothing of being easier. The former assumes possibilities of good, whereas the latter condemns from the outset.

Some objections to preaching as a method of influencing behavior

Few will deny that preaching is an ideal method of influencing human behavior, and it will perhaps be well to pause here and consider some of its limitations. Perhaps one of the first that suggests itself is problem of meeting people's needs. The subject with which the minister deals may be very helpful to some and not to others. And yet if he tries to make it general enough to fit everybody, he may not aid anyone--and the reverse applies with equal force. In general, no doubt, it is better to deal with the concrete and particular than with their opposites.

But in doing this, the preacher runs into another difficulty--making his sermon so concrete that somebody is burnt. Jones wakes up to the fact that he is being talked about. A minister may not always have the freedom, therefore, to talk about those things which may be in most need of discussion--as when he seeks to preach the social gospel to a congregation

of means. Conditions vary, however, as do men, for some preachers have complete freedom in their pulpits, even in wealthy congregations.

The infrequency of the sermon, usually once or twice a week at most, also makes it less influential. Not only is the content of the sermons forgotten, to some extent, from week to week, but the loss of emotional force is even greater. This is an objection that cannot be overcome as long as preaching is confined to Sundays. It makes all the more necessary careful use of the time that is given to the sermon.

In spite of every effort the preacher may make to think cooperatively with the congregation, it must be admitted that it is but a substitute for the real thing. Vicarious creativity is hardly as desirable as the activity itself. The preacher cannot possibly represent all the differences of view or wide range of experience embodied in his congregation. It is the constant opportunity given to share this with the whole group which gives cooperative thinking a great advantage over preaching--as we shall point out more fully later. This possibility keeps one actively thinking himself, whereas with the preacher doing it all, the chances are greatly lessened. And yet unless the congregation is thinking with the preacher, it can hardly be expected to arrive at his conclusions, much less carry them into practice.

Closely related to this is the fact that the individual in the congregation has no way of knowing the effect of the sermon on others. Thus its influence loses a very strong support, namely group approval. We have already noted the import-

ance of the group for the individual--its approval and disapproval carrying weight with its members. This is again an advantage of the group discussion method, for the conclusions its reaches have its sanction. It made a distinct difference on a certain Sunday evening at the First Congregational Church here, when Dr. McCall's castigation of the race prejudice inherent in the policy of the Berkeley Protective Association was applauded by a portion of the congregation. Such applause undoubtedly had the effect of stiffening the opposition and heartening the liberals, including the preacher. Morale is dependent on commonly held opinions, and ordinarily preaching gives no opportunity for effecting such interchange of ideas among members of the congregation, or group.

The preacher's advantages over other public speakers

Everything considered, it is probable that preaching affords greater opportunities for influencing human, or adult behavior, than any other type of public speaking. One of the most important reasons for this is the friendly pastoral relationship between preacher and people. Because of this, the minister speaks as a friend and counsellor chiefly, not just as an official of the church merely. Such a connection makes possible a more direct and searching sermon as well as more ready acceptance on the part of those in the pews. Obviously, one who is a total stranger to a congregation has an invisible barrier between himself and his auditors that only time and acquaintance can remove.

By the same token, appreciation of the preacher's

character heightens his influence. Living and working among his people, opportunity is given them to determine the man's measure, purposes and sincerity. All of these are preaching as effectively as the sermons or other voluntary influences the minister may exert on his people, if not moreso. They reënforce his words. Altogether, therefore, few men have finer opportunities for influence, both voluntary and indirect, or unconscious, than the preacher. Here again we note the impossibility of considering preaching apart from the man who does it.

Still a third factor working with the preacher is worship. We are considering the sermon in its setting, it will be remembered, not apart from it. While it is not the chief purpose of worship to prepare for the sermon to follow it, there can be no doubt about its value in that regard. Worship helps in shifting attention from petty, everyday concerns to the deeper things of life and in making the individual more God-conscious. The sharpening of spiritual sensibilities and the welding of individual into group consciousness make an almost ideal preparation for a message directed to the minds, hearts and wills of the congregation. Few, if any, other public gatherings are so well prepared for a speaker as is the church gathering for the preacher.

Probably the fact that a congregation is as a rule composed of individuals not wholly unfamiliar with one another operates favorably also. In somewhat the same way that friendship between pastor and people increases his influence with them, so friendliness among the people themselves creates a better atmosphere for the preacher's message. A higher morale

is found in churches having a stable congregation than in those with transient, such as is often found in large downtown churches. The seed sown by the preacher are far more apt to take root and grow if warmed by the radiance of Christian fellowship.

It would seem, therefore, that preaching can be an effective method of influencing behavior. By employing certain psychological principles its power can be increased. But to the means available to all public speakers, the preacher adds a personal and religious relationship which makes his influence greater than theirs. But the place of the church in modern society is such that preaching alone is not sufficient, hence some other means of influence over adults must be found. Adult education, will then, be the next subject for consideration.

IV

THE CHURCH'S STAKE IN ADULT EDUCATION

Religion does not hold the place in modern society it might reasonably be expected to have. Since it has been the business of the church to be the minister of religion, it must bear a large part of the responsibility for this condition. The intellectual advance in other fields has frequently been ahead of that in religion and the same probably is true today. But in any case scientific knowledge is more widespread than modern religious truth. Religion, in other words, has been the last resort of superstition. This may be partially accounted for by the vital importance of religion to people, but however that may be, the situation is unfortunate. How can progress be made in overcoming this difficulty? Let us examine adult education for whatever help it may render in solving this problem.

Adult education and intellectual growth

Perhaps the most serious aspect of the church's situation today is the persistence of unscientific ideas among large numbers of its constituents, commonly known as fundamentalism. Creedal regularity is the touchstone here rather than an open-minded approach to truth. Can an institution that refuses to accept the findings of modern science reasonably be expected to survive in modern society as an effective agency?

Granting that a more enlightened ministry might change

this situation somewhat, still no preacher can afford to give most of his time in the pulpit to teaching. The congregation would not long stand for it, nor would the preacher be able to do the job thoroly in the limited time at his disposal. Furthermore, it is doubtful whether the formalities of preaching are well-suited to teaching--no preparation on the part of the congregation is required and no questions can be asked at the time they arise in the minds of the auditors.

None of these objections obtain, however, against adult classes. Frankly organised as educational enterprises, they would employ educational methods. These groups, too, would include only those interested in the problem set for study--an important factor in the morale of the class. This condition cannot be met in a congregation, where there are almost always a number of people not interested in the sermon.

As evidence of the value of education in solving intellectual problems to a large extent, consider the Congregational church. It is almost entirely free of any modernist-fundamentalist controversy. The reasons for this are probably twofold: (1) the higher level of education among its membership; and (2) the theological training of its ministry, the larger part of which has been schooled in institutions thoroly modern in outlook.

Even here, however, there is still plenty of room for improvement. Presumably the First Congregational Church of Berkeley has as intelligent a constituency as any in the United States. And yet, practically every one of Dr. McCall's series of sermons on "Not Known to the Laity" (dealing largely with

the results of modern Biblical scholarship) has brought forth a large number of inquiries and provoked some opposition, indicating that there is still considerable ignorance and misinformation, or prejudice, concerning the Bible.

It would seem, therefore, that the clearing away of all this and the establishment of religious knowledge on a sound, scientific basis is prerequisite to any real progress on the part of the modern church. It cannot compel the respect of this age until it has achieved this. And it is believed that adult education furnishes the means.

The church's program of religious education demands intelligent parents.

The more progressive churches are giving serious attention to the religious education of their youth, recognizing the perils of religious ignorance in an age of science. And yet it will be obvious that the influence of the church can only with the greatest difficulty offset adverse influences at home. Indeed, whether a child shall have any interest in religion is almost entirely dependent on the home environment. Hence, parent education is really the first step in children's religious education. This is an important and very promising form of adult education.

However, it is not enough that parents should be able to give their children a good start, that is, merely bring them up the the church school age and then turn the task over to it. The task is not so easily delegated, for, regardless of what the school does for the child, his education in the home goes right on and if the parents are to do their task well, they will

have to grow in knowledge themselves. One need only point out that probably a very large proportion of the disinterestedness of modern youth in religion is due to the inadequacy of both home and church religious influences, predominantly the former. Parents who pin their faith on the Bible as verbally inspired can hardly expect their children to do less at first. Only, the latter, when exposed to science and philosophy at college frequently throw faith overboard along with the Bible.

But not only do parents need intellectual guidance of this kind, they also need to have knowledge of child care. Since we are now fairly well rid of the idea that being a woman makes a mother, there is a large opportunity for influencing child development thru the study of its problems under wise leadership. Such groups are already being formed under state auspices in California, and many of them are meeting in churches. This field offers great opportunities of pioneering to the church, with unlimited possibilties of good.

If then, the church is to make its educational program for youth effective, it cannot neglect the parents of its young people. Adult education gives it a new and vital contact with the home which it has not possessed before. As the family is the unit of society, this contact is of the utmost importance.

Establishing the Kingdom of God demands knowledge

The tremendous advances man has made in his mastery of his physical environment is a tremendous tribute to his intelligence. By creative thot, diligent application and infinite

pains, man has lifted himself out of savagery, superstition and ignorance into his present state of civilization. But in doing all this, he has raised, or created many spiritual problems which remain unsolved.

It is not the business of scientists to solve these spiritual difficulties--it is not their function. But it is the task of the church. How well has it done its work? To be sure, many leaders of the church have shown commendable energy in assailing war, race, industrial injustice, politics and the like. But the rank and file, the people, have hardly been faced, even, with the issues. Here again, preaching alone is inadequate to the task--it can perform a valuable and needed function in setting the problems and stimulating to action--but that is not enough. The minister's wrestling with them is not training the people's muscles to grapple with them. "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation."

How much does the average church know about its community? It is safe to wager that more is frequently known about some missionary district across the seas than the church's own. And, of course, the willingness of church members to support missions to the Chinese, but refusal to tolerate them in in their own community, is notorious. Too often, Christian people will work for a warless world but refuse to establish the conditions of permanent peace in their own factories. Until they discover for <u>themselves</u> the complexity and ramifications of establishing a Christian social order, little progress will be made toward it. Adult education offers a way by which men and women may both study and act cooperatively.

The need for self-expression

One of the most attractive aspects of Jesus' religion has always been its promise of a more abundant life. While, no doubt, modern life is fuller and richer than that of a century ago, still in its economic aspect, at least, it is becoming more and more cramping. The demands of a man's vocation become increasingly specialized--he is developing into an ever more insignificant cog in a huge machine. And this machine makes the man quite as much as the man uses it. The human product of the machine begins to bear the stamp of the automatic, uniformity.

Hence we are finding that at the very time when social problems are requiring more intelligence and broader vision, industrial life is making it less possible. And yet the urge for self-expression is by no means extingushed (fortunately) --it is finding outlets in jazz, joy-riding and gin. If attempts at release of the self rise to no higher level, it is because the satisfactions and joys of richer ways are unfamiliar. Adult education, perhaps, offers the means not only of reeducating the habits of appreciation, but also of providing opportunities for self-expression.

The feeling of frustation men have in national and economic life results largely from their sense of not counting for anything. (Tightening up one bolt all day long is hardly conducive to an enlarged sense of selfhood!) It is a very human desire for a personality, conscious of its power, to wish to have some influence in molding its environment. But before the larger units can be reshaped as they should be, smaller ones

will need consideration. And in these it is possible for every individual to contribute. Every one is capable of bringing intelligent influence to bear somewhere--in home, neighborhood, community, club, church or trade union. Adult education specifically aims to train individuals for a more fruitful participation in these smaller collective units which do so much to mold significant experience. Since adult education is "the art of transmuting ---experience into influence", the adult learner becomes a spokesman for ideas--his own ideas, representing his peculiar contribution to life. Society needs to provide itself with every means for securing the contributions of its members no less than the members should find abundant opportunity for self-expression. The church is already doing something here thru worship and fellowship, but it can enrich the lives of its constituents even more by adult education.

The conditions for establishing such groups

It should be pointed out that already considerable is being done in the way of adult education in the United States. In addition to the peculiar contributions of the Inquiry to the movement, there are two other organizations: the National Council for Parent Education and the American Association for Adult Education. As a result of their experience these principles have been suggested:

1. "Adult education groups should be composed of persons --not too many--who are intensely interested in the search for light upon some particular aspect of experience or some real perplexing problem.
2. "The time and place of meeting should be determined with

reference to the convenience of the group rather than with respect to their place in some formal program.

3. "The length of period devoted to such study should be only so long as is necessary to accomplish the desired end. This may be three weeks, three months, or three years. One of the practical difficulties is to decide when is the best time to stop.

4. "The best groups, that is, the most educative, will be those in which there is the largest possible participation of all the members. The atmosphere should be thoroly democratic, the leader should lead, not dominate the thot of the group. At points where the combined experience of the members of the group is insufficient to meet the demands of the situation, a specialist may be brought in, a lecture given, or a book reviewed. The method, therefore, should be that of free discussion.

5. "Out of this discussion there should gradually emerge a body of fact and experience which the group under guidance of the leader will proceed to organize into such form as is most helpful in meeting the issues which they are facing. It may well be a part of this educational process for the group to put their convictions to the test in some practical experiment or project."[1]

With these suggestions as to method in mind, we turn now to a detailed consideration of cooperative thirking, or group discussion, as the best method of adult education.

1. Winchester, B S, The Religious Education of Adults, Religious Education, December, 1928, p 939-41)

V

GROUP DISCUSSION AS A MEANS OF INFLUENCING HUMAN BEHAVIOR

Cooperative thinking, or group discussion, may be defined as the process by which a group of persons (not too many) under the leadership of one familiar with the method, considers some problem of vital interest to it, with a view to understanding and acting upon it.

Cooperative thinking and the group

This method of influencing human behavior derives one of its principal sources of effectiveness from the fact that it operates thru the group. The importance of the group lies in the fact that it is the medium in which the individual becomes a personal self. Personality is a social product; hence, most of the attitudes, habits, and ideals which motivate an individual are a reflection of those to be found in his group. In the case of children, this group is the family; as they grow older, school and college groups exercise their influence also.

As Sheffield has well stated the matter: "Modern life is complicated by the fact that we pursue our most vital interests not as individuals but as members of organized groups. Questions of conduct, therefore, are apt to take the form not simply of what is right or wrong for one of us to do, but of what it is best to do under the circumstances that require cooperation with others of our group or of other groups who may not share our views. Our social ideals, therefore--such ideals as godli-

ness, patriotism, liberty, democracy, charity--must get something more than a vague mass acceptance. In the organized society of today our movements are complex. The 'plot' of its collective life is dramatic: its action centers on the revaluating of these ideals--on applying them to situations within which must be encompassed an adjustment of various interests. To play their due part, these interests must first be understood, and to be understood they must be allowed to speak for themselves."[1]

Cooperative thirking, then, is an effort on the part of a group to re-value its ideals, to consider them objectively, or to solve some problem with a view to action upon it. The advantage of the group approach to the difficulty is that whatever decision is reached, should normally secure the adherence of all members of it. Each one can feel the support of the group in any action he takes in line with its decision. Herein lies its superiority over preaching--it definitely adds the group's sanction to the course of conduct worked out.

Group democracy and influence

It is widely recognized in the field of organization that the most effective and intelligent action results from participation by those concerned in the decision. The reason for this is obvious: consent involves voluntary, or self motivation, whereas compulsion, by definition, is external. And so it is that laws which are not generally acceptable to a people are very difficult of enforcement. The same thing is true in

1. Joining in Public Discussion,

the field of morals--the most effective law is that made by the individual for himself.

Group thinking does just that--every member helps to shape the product of of its thinking and has therefore the interest in the result which derives from any creative and cooperative enterprise. Just as truly as the artisan takes an interest in every carving he makes, so every member of a group may justly feel a direct and personal interest in its conclusions. The very process of cooperative thinking, then, creates increasing loyalty as it continues.

This is well illustrated in the case of the Girl Reserve summer conferences. Some rules are required if the group of several hundred girls is to live together for ten days or so. Formerly, the adults made them for the girls, with the expectation they would be obeyed. But the method was not too successful. So now a large committee of the girls themselves draw up their own rules and before acceptance by the larger group full opportunity for criticism and suggestion is given. As a result of this more democratic practice there has been much better cooperation on the part of the girls.

Attention is assured

One of the preacher's greatest problems practically disappears in group discussion--namely, attention. To begin with no one is supposed to be in the group at all unless he is interested in the problem it is facing. But further than this, the process of cooperative thinking is such that this native interest is enhanced. If one is interested in an idea himself, he

is always desirous of knowing what others think and feel about it--and this is particularly true of the sort of problems a group would usually be facing: questions about which there is a difference of opinion, or ones highly charged with emotional content.

Likewise, a person is quite as much interested in what others think of his views. It is almost certain that everything that goes on in the group will be directly related to every member, who is either agreeing or disagreeing, questioning, modifying or deliberating upon what has just been set forth. A real clash of opinion is always interesting, especially to those immediately concerned.

What has been called the "chase technique" is well illustrated in group discussion. It is fascinating to follow an idea, like a volley ball, being tossed about in the group, no one quite sure just where it will light next. There are times of excitement as well as reflective searches for the right shades of meaning. And so this process which starts with attention, increases it immensely, making interest in the conclusion (and hence the possibility of action in accordance with it) almost a foregone conclusion.

Emotional release and integration of views

"In proportion as a person is attempting to win a group to the results of his own thinking will he need to use artificial methods of stirring up emotion in order to secure action. In proportion as a group has had opportunity to face issues for itself and to come to its own conclusions, will emotion be

inherent and an artificial stimulus be unnecessary."[1] Here will be found the answer to the objection made against group discussion that it is a wholly intellectual process, and cannot therefore induce action.

The very fact that a group begins with a problem of importance to it, upon which members presumably have convictions, insures the presence of feeling from the start. Indeed one of the difficulties may be that of securing a fair examination of all viewpoints in the face of strong emotion. However, the recognition that others hold differing convictions with equal intensity is usually sobering as well as stimulating in that it provokes further consideration with a view to integration. Achievement of unity out of difference brings a sense of satisfaction, release and exaltation, which accompany the carrying out of the decision.

Perhaps a further word should be said in elaboration of the remark above that the clash of convictions has a sobering influence. An individual always has a pent-up feeling as long as he is harboring an emotion; giving expression to it, on the other hand, produces a certain amount of satisfaction, or release, and clears the mind for more rational influences. Elliott reports an interesting example of this. At an interracial conference composed of whites and negroes, the strong feelings against the negroes on the part of some of the whites finally found expression. The negroes replied telling just what they thot of the attitude of the whites. Naturally the process

1. Elliott, H S, The Process of Group Thinking, 150

was painful to both sides. However, there was such earnestness in it all and such an evident desire to understand one another that "the result of this frankness was increased respect and mutual understanding."[1]

Thinking is stimulated

Group discussion at its best, too, promotes the most effective thinking in the individual because its own manner of procedure is patterned after the individual's way of thinking. This has been worked out by Dewey, who suggests the steps thru which every instance of logical thot passes, as follows: "(1) a felt difficulty; (2) its location and definition; (3) suggestion of possible solution; (4) development by reasoning of bearings of the sugesstion; (5) further observation and experiment leading to its acceptance or rejection; that is, the conclusion of belief or unbelief."[2]

Aside from the stimulus to thinking which comes from the presence of others doing the same, there are some other advantages of group, over individual, thinking (assuming, of course, that we are comparing a group of individuals of equal insight and intelligence with that of the individual thinker.) From the nature of the case, no one individual could incorporate as wide a range of experience in his life as a group of individuals could. Consequently, in locating and defining the difficulty (step two above), many minds will bring their points of view and experience to bear, each seeing it from a slightly

1. Op. cit., 173
2. How We Think, 72

different angle. Hence a problem that seems to any single member of the group limited to a certain area, may have his horizons greatly extended.

The same applies to the other steps in the thot process, all of which gain by moving in a larger field of experience and knowledge than any single person could provide. Action on the basis of such thinking, can, therefore, be more intelligent.

Limitations of cooperative thinking

It is not to be supposed that there is anything magical about this process--the best group thinking, like the best individual thinking, improves with experience. No group can be expected to secure the results at its first meetings which more experienced groups achieve. It is well for beginners in this method to deal with the less difficult situations. As in every other worth while achievement, the fullest rewards only come to those who constantly keep at it.

Group thinking is not a means of pooling ignorance or misinformation with the expectation that reliable results will follow. This is perhaps especially true in groups of limited education and experience. There is just as much demand for information and the expert in group discussion as elsewhere--more in fact. There is a notable difference between a lecture given to a group because the lecturer thinks it will be profited, and one which has been called for by the group because it sees progress as impossible without the information. The vitality of the discussion method lies in its creating a genuine desire for knowledge rather than in assuming the existence of the need.

Group discussion as creative

This cooperative search for the highest and best solution of a difficulty and the integration of conflicting views which results therefrom, are in a real sense spiritual. Genuine participation in a group releases one from inhibitions, strains, defence-attitudes and over-anxiety about ones own party and insitutions. "The group becomes dynamically spiritual," says Elliott, "when the members are willing not only to search for a course of action which will be true to the highest values they have recognized and the deepest meanings that have come in life for them, but when they are willing to reexamine these values and search for still higher and better purposes. To be truly spiritual, values are not only used as tests of ways of acting but what Professor Coe call the 're-evalutation of values' takes place. For those who believe in spiritual resources, both within and beyond themselves, such a process makes possible the release of those resources in direct relation to immediate and important concerns. Indeed, the culmination of this dynamic process is found when the group is facing a situation in which they are baffled, in which they do not see the way out, which seems to them beyond their power. Something happens which is in the highest sense dynamic when a group in fellowship and in conference lays hold of the previously unreleased resources within itself. At such a time there comes insight as to what to do, and strength and ability to carry out the purposes, which represent more than the mathematical total of the resources of the members of the group when taken separately. Such release of spiritual power is a manifestation of the divine resources

all around us which are at the command of all those who in a group process meet the conditions of spiritual creativity."[1]

Adult education thru the process of group discussion would seem, then, to be both an effective influence with its members and a happy complement to preaching. Each has a place in the life of the church which is significant. Discussion, because of its informal, adaptable and educational character can accomplish certain tasks in the church which can be done in no other way so effectively; and preaching, on the other hand, performs the indispensable function of inspiring and keeping alive men's sense of God. The more democratic method is well suited to the church in action; the older, to the church in contemplation.

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Conclusion

We have seen that the older-psychology, which regarded man as a creature of instincts, is no longer tenable. The passing of atomism, the disagreement over the nature of instincts as well as their number, and the crude genetic methods employed all make the instinct theory impossible. Human behavior is not something fixed and automatic. Rather, as the newer psychology is showing us, its principal characteristic is plasticity, responsiveness to environment, guided by intelligence. It is this flexibility, directed by intelligence that puts man in an entirely different class from animals. He can learn to do new things--he is therefore always potentially greater than he is actually.

But plasticity is not characteristic of the child only--it extends well into maturity. Indeed adults up to forty-five, at least, can learn as well as they could from fifteen to twenty. The rapid progress in many fields of knowledge today, as well as professional demands, make adult education very desirable, if not necessary.

Since adults are capable of learning, it is possible to change their behavior. Preaching is one of the means open to the church. Maximum effectiveness in preaching is attained by employing certain psychological techniques, among which are included movement in thot development, suspense, thinking with instead of for the congregation, as means toward getting and holding attention. Greater influence in the sermon is secured, too, if it deals with problems that are real for the congregation

and if picturesque language is used. To this must be added creative, kindling qualities. There is value in relating the laws of learning to the sermon as indicating its place in changing behavior. And while it was pointed out that preaching was not a perfect method of influencing behavior, still of those types aiming to change people thru public address, it is most significant.

Partly because of the limitations of preaching and partly because of the church's need for a different approach to its task, adult education was suggested. It would aid people in their intellectual needs, particularly as they relate to religion; it would make more effective and helpful parents; it would strengthen the church's hands in dealing with the social order and provide a much-needed form of self-expression.

The form of the adult education suggested was group thinking, because it harnesses the group's influence to problems of social import; it is more effective because democratic; it secures interest easily, provides for emotional release and integration of conflicts and stimulates thinking. And tho it has some limitations, it does have a creative quality akin to worship.

Thru preaching and group discussion, then, the church has a real opportunity to influence human behavior.

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